Journal 2

This week in ancient civilizations Ms. Kennedy basically had the students either working on a reading assignment or in the media center working on their upcoming projects. Because of this we didn’t really get to observe her teaching. This made me a little nervous as the first instruction the classes we’re present for was going to come from us. I wasn’t sure how I felt about this because I would have really liked to see her teach a lesson before we did, but at the same time I am very excited that we get to dive right in. My thoughts and emotions are mixed as my brain would like more time to prepare, but the rest of me is pretty sure that we can knock this out and be pretty successful.

The only potential problems I could see in the classes we have would be that the fourth hour group seems like they can pretty loud and out of hand at times. However, they seem to think that it’s pretty cool that they have two college students in their class and were pretty well-behaved while we were there. In the fifth hour, some of the groups seemed to not necessarily like the groups they were in for the project so this could present a problem, but they’re good kids and they still worked very hard. Ms. Kennedy’s classes are accustomed to group work by this point because they had a different group project at the end of their last unit as well. Ms. Kennedy told us that she puts the students into different groups based on different criteria and the type of project. Sometimes she lets the students decide who they want to work with and sometimes she uses their current test scores, grades, and in-class performance to put students together in more diversified groups. She also lets students decide to opt-out of the group work and do something by themselves, depending on the project. She explained that when she puts them in groups based on criteria she makes sure that she puts a mix of higher performing students with lower performing students as well as trying to make them equal in terms of gender. This process seems very long and complicated to me but I definitely see the benefits. If you put higher performing students with lower performing students, the hope is that the higher performing students will push the lower performing students to do better and in terms of gender equality that just makes sense. This set-up is also very applicable to the real world as we cannot always choose who we work with as adults, but we still have to cooperate to get the desired results.

Because we didn’t really get to see our cooperating teacher teach it is hard to determine whether or not she uses inquiry types of teaching. Her projects do seem to encourage the students to do their own inquiry into certain subjects to produce a final product though. She also puts an academic focus question on the board at the beginning of every class that either requires that students pull from their previous knowledge to answer a question about new content or to recap what they have learned before. In using previous knowledge to answer new questions, I believe Ms. Kennedy is using inquiry based teaching. These questions are also a formative assessment in that they are not graded and they allow her to know if her students are truly grasping all of the information that she wants them to.

We didn’t get to ask her about how she feels about MCAs but I would like to do so in the future just to get her input.